

Community Living Ontario Policy Snapshot

Separating Housing from Disability Supports: An Idea Whose Time has Come?

It is common practice in Ontario for people who have developmental disabilities to access housing and other needed supports from a single service provider. A number of stakeholders have argued that separating the provision of housing from other supports would boost system flexibility and increase people's ability to obtain a full suite of supports.

PPeople who are eligible for developmental services in Ontario generally get a package deal when they leave the waiting list: they are connected with an agency that provides both housing and support services. On the whole, people are unable to pick and choose multiple service providers for housing on one hand, and the various supports they need on the other.

A [recent study](#) led by a group of researchers from Centennial College and Community Living Toronto discusses the separation of housing and supports, noting that “significant positive change in the housing landscape could result from separating support from housing.”

The study makes the case that separating developmental supports from housing would “allow families and individuals with IDD to find their own housing solutions and to obtain the level of support they require, rather than forcing them to accept any available premade housing solution with built-in support simply because it is funded.”

The separation of housing and support is something that a number of community living organizations are already experimenting with. This change has the potential to increase the flexibility of housing, allowing people to change their living situation while keeping needed supports (or vice versa). It could also open the door to growth in funding for people who live with family members, taking pressure off of the overburdened and waitlisted developmental services sector, and addressing the crisis of care among aging parents of people who have developmental disabilities.

The Centennial/CLToronto study draws attention to two important realities in Ontario:

- Approximately 60% of adults who have a developmental disability live with family members, and are eligible for only very limited provincial government support;
- From 2009 to 2014, there was a 50% increase in the number of people waiting for supported residential services in Ontario (currently estimated at more than 15,000 people), but only a 1% increase in people newly accessing such services.

The [2016 Ombudsman report](#) and the [2014 Auditor General report](#) on developmental services show that, among older adults, it is mostly people in situations of severe crisis (e.g., where family members can no longer provide care and support) who are offered funded spaces.

Preparing for Developmental Service Reform

The province's new developmental service reform plan, [Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion](#), anticipates "a system that is more responsive to people's needs and supports greater choice and flexibility for people over the course of their lives." This vision aligns well with [Article 19](#) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which directs states to ensure that "persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement."

Under current policy on developmental service supports and housing, people in the system rarely have a choice of who they live with, or the staff they engage with on a daily basis. They may stay in adverse housing situations because they are unable to do without the support connected to that housing.

The separation of housing and support has the potential to:

- Allow people greater choice and control over where and with whom they live, by whom they are supported, and how much paid support they receive.
- Allow agencies to more easily transition people who desire more independence out of group homes and into supported independent living.
- Allow families to support adult children to move out of the family home while maintaining needed supports, thereby preventing crisis situations and supporter burnout.
- Allow adults who so desire to continue to live with a family member, while accessing funding for needed developmental supports.
- Enable increased funding and service equity among people who have developmental disabilities and their families.

In our new report, **Building a Full Life + A Home of One's Own in the Community**, Community Living Ontario recommends the separation of developmental housing and support funding envelopes to increase flexibility in the system, and to improve people's control over their living situation. We believe these recommendations fit well with the directions outlined in the province's reform plan, and will lead to improved outcomes among people supported.

For more information about our recommendations for developmental service reform in Ontario, you can access Building a Full Life [here](#).

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Community Living Ontario is a non-profit organization that advocates alongside people who have an intellectual disability, their families and agencies that support them across the province.

June 2021